

Message Text

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DIA WASHDC

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 0771

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJECT: COMMUNIST PRESENCE IN GOVERNMENT

REF: (A) LISBON 0371 (DTG 171404Z JAN 76), (B) LISBON 0439
(DTG 211349Z JAN 76), (C) LISBON 0716 (DTG 021411Z FEB 76)

SUMMARY: REVELATIONS OF COMMUNIST COMPLICITY IN ABORTIVE NOV 25
LEFT-WING COUP WILL NOT LEAD IMMEDIATELY TO COMMUNIST OUSTER
FROM GOVERNMENT. EMBASSY BELIEVES MILITARY AND DEMOCRATIC
PARTIES WILL CONTINUE TO FIND ARGUMENTS FOR KEEPING COMMUNISTS IN
GOVERNMENT UNTIL ELECTIONS MORE PERSUASIVE THAN THOSE AGAINST.
END SUMMARY.

1. IT IS NOW CLEAR THAT THE OFFICIAL REVELATION JAN 20
OF COMMUNIST COMPLICITY IN THE ABORTIVE NOV 25 COUP (REF A)
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WILL NOT RESULT IN THE IMMEDIATE OUSTER OF THE PCP FROM THE

GOVERNMENT.

THE POPULAR DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PPD) DECIDED IN ITS JAN 24-25 NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING NOT TO DEMAND THE PCP'S EXPULSION, WHILE THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CENTER PARTY (CDS), WHICH HAD PREVIOUSLY QUESTIONED WHETHER THE COMMUNISTS SHOULD BE REWARDED FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE COUP ATTEMPT BY CONTINUED REPRESENTATION IN THE GOVERNMENT, HAS FAILED TO FOLLOW UP ON THE ISSUE. THE DECISIONS OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES NOT TO PRESS FOR A COMMUNIST OUSTER WERE BASED ON A BALANCING OF THE FOLLOWING PROS AND CONS:

2. ARGUMENTS AGAINST KEEPING PCP IN GOVERNMENT:

-- THE NOV 25 COUP REPORT DESCRIBES THE PCP AS "SUPPORTING THE PLOT" AND GIVES SEVERAL SPECIFIC INSTANCES OF DIRECT PARTICIPATION BY PCP MEMBERS.

-- EVEN WITHOUT THE NOV 25 EVENTS, THE PCP HAD BEEN SUSPECT AS A SUPPORTER OF THE LEFTIST MOB ACTION AGAINST THE AZEVEDO GOVERNMENT SHORTLY AFTER ITS TAKEOVER.

-- PCP SAYS IT WILL NOT SUPPORT GOVERNMENT ON ISSUES CONTRARY TO COMMUNIST POLICY. PCP CLAIMS THAT MEMBERS IN GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATE AS INDIVIDUALS AND NOT AS PART OF A COALITION.

-- PCP PRESENCE IN GOVERNMENT LENDS IT A LEGITIMACY UNDESERVED BY ITS DECLINING POPULAR SUPPORT.

-- PCP IS ABLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF PRESENCE TO MAINTAIN AND EXTEND ITS PENETRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACY.

-- THE MILITARY AND THE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES ARE FULLY AWARE OF THE U.S. POSITION IN FAVOR OF PUSHING THE COMMUNISTS OUT. ALTHOUGH THEY DO NOT NECESSARILY ACCEPT THE SUBSTANCE OF OUR ARGUMENT, THEY ARE CONCERNED ABOUT MAINTAINING GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE USG.

3. ARGUMENTS FOR KEEPING PCP IN GOVERNMENT:

-- IN THE DELICATE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD, THERE IS A STRONG CONFIDENTIAL

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CURRENT IN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES AND THE MILITARY THAT, GIVEN THE TROUBLE-MAKING POTENTIAL OF THE COMMUNISTS, IT WOULD BE MORE PRUDENT TO KEEP THE PCP IN THE GOVERNMENT THAN TO ALLOW IT TO GO INTO FULL OPPOSITION.

-- THE PS AND ELEMENTS OF THE PPD, BELIEVE THAT IT IS IMPORTANT TO TAG THE PCP WITH PART OF THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PAINFUL AUSTERITY MEASURES THAT THE GOP IS NOW UNDERTAKING.

-- SOARES HAS TOLD US THAT THE PS, ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN A PURGE OF THE COMMUNISTS IN THE BUREAUCRACY, WANTS THE COVER OF BEING ABLE TO SAY THAT THE PS SUPPORTS THE PRESENCE OF THE COMMUNISTS IN THE GOVERNMENT.

-- THERE IS SOME QUESTION OVER THE DEPTH OF PCP INVOLVEMENT IN THE NOV 25 COUP. MANY BELIEVE THAT, WHILE THE COUP MAY HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO PCP LEADERS, IT TOOK PASSIVE ROLE AND RANK AND FILE INVOLVEMENT WAS NOT AUTHORIZED BY LEADERSHIP.

-- SOME LEFT-INCLINED POLITICAL LEADERS BELIEVE THAT A TAMED AND CONTROLLABLE PCP SERVES AS A USEFUL COUNTERWEIGHT TO THE EXTREME RIGHT IN THE UNSTABLE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD.

-- IDEALISTIC LEFTISTS, SEEING PCP AS LEGITIMATE PARTY, BELIEVE IT MUST BE ALLOWED TO PLAY DEMOCRATIC GAME.

-- ELEMENTS OF THE ANTI-COMMUNIST LEFT FEEL THAT THE COMMUNISTS ARE ENTITLED TO A PRESENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT EQUAL TO THEIR SHARE OF THE 1975 VOTE. THEY DO NOT BELIEVE THAT COMMUNISTS SHOULD BE OUSTED UNTIL A GOVERNMENT FULLY LEGITIMATED BY ELECTIONS CAN BE FORMED.

4. MILITARY ASSOCIATED WITH MELO ANTUNES TEND TO FEEL THAT PCP DESERVE A PLACE IN THE GOVERNMENT AND SERVES AS EFFECTIVE COUNTERWEIGHT TO EXTREME RIGHT -- THE PRINCIPAL THREAT NOW IN ANTUNES'S VIEW. THE MORE CONSERVATIVE MILITARY WOULD PREFER TO HAVE THE COMMUNISTS OUT, BUT THEY ARE HESITANT TO TAKE THE RISK OF A PCP IN FULL OPPOSITION. MILITARY ULTRAS WOULD HAPPILY OUST PCP RIGHT NOW, BUT THEY DO NOT, AT LEAST YET, HAVE THE INFLUENCE TO DO SO.

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5. FUTURE PROSPECTS: EMBASSY BELIEVES POLITICAL PARTIES AND MILITARY WILL CONTINUE TO FIND ARGUMENTS FOR KEEPING COMMUNISTS IN GOVERNMENT MORE PERSUASIVE THAN THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST DURING THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN PCP AND DEMOCRATIC PARTIES WILL IMPROVE. ON THE CONTRARY, AS ELECTIONS NEAR, DEMOCRATIC PARTIES CAN BE EXPECTED TO VIE WITH ONE ANOTHER IN KNOCKING COMMUNISTS IN ORDER TO GARNER MAXIMUM POLITICAL ADVANTAGE FROM ANTI-COMMUNIST SENTIMENTS OF ELECTORATE. THE SOCIALISTS PLACE A HIGH PREMIUM ON INTERNAL PARTY UNITY. TO PLACATE ITS LEFTWING, THEREFORE, THE PS WILL TEMPER ITS ATTACKS AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS THROUGH CONTINUOUS STRONG SUPPORT OF SUCH "REVOLUTIONARY CONQUESTS" AS AGRARIAN REFORM. THE PCP, IN ADDRESSING RELATIONS WITH THE PS, CAN BE EXPECTED

TO CONTINUE RECENT EFFORTS TO PUSH ITS UNITY LINE RECENTLY
REITERATED BY CUNHAL (REF C). WE DO NOT EXPECT SOARES TO TRY
THAT LINE.
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